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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA TO HOST INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE CRICKET

¶1. (U) On March 24, 2009 Indian Premier League (IPL) chairman, Lalit Modi announced that South Africa would host the IPL Twenty20 event due to security concerns following the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, Pakistan. The IPL will now kick-off on April 18 in Cape Town with the final to be played on May 24 in Johannesburg.

¶2. (U) South Africa beat England to the hosting rights because of several factors, including weather, finances, television rights and the speedy issuing of more than 1000 visas. Rain is less likely to affect matches in South Africa than England during the tournament period and with the U.S. dollar worth almost 10 rand it is an attractive option financially. In addition, Johannesburg-based sports channel SuperSport holds the rights to the IPL and international cricket in South Africa. Venues in South Africa will also be readily available as the domestic cricket season ends on April 9. Cricket South Africa indicated that another deciding factor was government's assurances that the 1000 plus visas required would be processed swiftly and the tournament would receive "red-carpet treatment."

¶3. (U) There have been concerns over player safety in South Asia following the Mumbai attacks in November 2008 and the specific targeting by armed militants of the Sri Lankan cricket team on tour in Pakistan in March. Indian officials have indicated that they are not able to provide adequate security to ensure player safety due to the fact that India's Parliamentary elections will be taking place during the same time frame. In press reports, India's cricket chief Shashank Manohar, said "due to the attitude of the government that it cannot provide security for the tournament, we are forced to take a decision to move the IPL out of India." There is terrorism in all four cricket-playing nations of the sub-continent, namely, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. In 1996, Australia and the West Indies refused to send teams to Sri Lanka after terrorist bombings in the country. There has been considerable resistance from players from outside South Asia to tour there. Pakistan has not had a cricket series for a year and is now unlikely to host any sort of international cricket in the foreseeable future.

¶4. (U) Both player and stadium security will be handled by Nicholls Steyn and Associates, a South African based global security consultant firm. CEO Robert Nicholls confirmed that his company is strategizing with the South African Police Services as well as local metro police to provide the best security for the event. He indicated that security would follow a similar model to that of last years T20 World Cup staged in South Africa. Nicholls stated that he is working with international intelligence agencies to monitor any possible terror threats, but due to security concerns was unable to elaborate on this matter. Comment: It is not expected that South Africa will encounter the same threat level for terror attacks as if the event were held in India. Although security is always a concern, the general feeling is that the attacks were isolated to the South Asia region and should not pose as serious a problem for South Africa. End Comment

¶5. (U) The IPL is a huge money maker; it earned \$724 million from franchises last year while nearly two billion people cumulatively watched the games over the tournament. Although much of the profits will remain with the IPL, South Africa will reap financial benefits in other ways. PolAsst spoke with Don McIntosh COO of Cricket South Africa (CSA) who indicated that CSA will receive a hosting fee of

R90 million (USD 9 million). In addition, he predicted that the IPL would use more than 30,000 hotel rooms and 10,000 domestic airline tickets over the next six weeks creating a major boost to South Africa's economy, especially the struggling airline industry. The IPL has also concluded ground transport contracts with leading car hire firms. It is expected that the IPL could net South Africa \$15 million over six weeks. Comment: If South Africa can organize the IPL at such short notice it will surely serve as a boost in the run up to the 2010 Soccer World Cup. In addition, it is hoped that the publicity South Africa will receive from the event will encourage travelers to head for South Africa. However, all these positive factors are dependent on whether the IPL proceeds without incident. End Comment